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JOURNAL  
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### In the Air We Breathe

Knowledge of the effects of air pollution on human health is scanty. What passes as evidence is in many cases incomplete, confusing or even contradictory.

Announcement by the United States public health service of a broad scientific study is therefore welcome. The surgeon general had previously said that the health service would review evidence of connection between smoking and lung cancer.

The lung cancer investigation would have been less than satisfactory without looking into the possibility that various kinds of air pollution, aside from tobacco smoke, may be a contributing factor. The Tobacco Institute, after a recent study, reported that lung cancer death rates vary widely from region to region, city to city. Green Bay was one city far below the national average.

Yet presumably the percentage of heavy smokers is about the same in urban areas. And, again, in some spots lung cancer was found quite prevalent among persons not addicted to heavy smoking.

Aside from lung cancer, human health may be affected in many ways by foreign matter in the air we breathe. Industry releases an estimated 50 to 100 million tons of smoke, dust fumes and acids into the atmosphere each year. The people of Los Angeles have become painfully aware of the presence of irritating air pollutants.

Other types of air pollution, including some that give no warning of their presence, may actually be perils to health. There is great need to learn which they are and their effects. Only then will we know which present the greatest threats and how to provide better protection against them.

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RECORD  
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### Let Us Have Facts

The conflict which has raged over the cancer danger involved in smoking at last is to be resolved. The Public Health Service, which cautiously broached the idea of an intensive study of all the factors late last spring, is prepared to bring its idea into fruition.

During the next two months Surgeon General Terry will appoint a commission of 12 people from the medical and scientific world and the tobacco industry to begin the study. The commission will gather data for six months and then spend possibly another six months in an evaluation.

Regardless of how long it takes, the sooner the American people are supplied with facts rather than claims and theories, the better off all will be. The tobacco industry has been bearing the brunt of the attack for several years, ever since the Public Health Service and the American Cancer Society labeled smoking as a prime cause of lung cancer. Since then the industry has brought its own research results out into the open to disprove contentions.

As a result, the smoker is confused. He likes the relaxation provided by the weed and he is unwilling to give it up unless the case is proven. There is another side — the economic — to be considered. The tobacco industry is an eight-billion-dollar a year activity. To bring it to an abrupt halt will be a shock to the economy.

The evidence is far from established. The medical profession leans heavily on the side of cancer as a grave offender and cause of cancer. Britain and Italy have embarked on antismoking campaigns although they have not banned tobacco. A Hungarian cancer expert attending the World Cancer Institute at Moscow says he does not believe smoking is the offender. He looks for other causes. Thus the battle rages and neither side has conclusive proof.

Surgeon General Terry gives assurance that the experts named to the study group will be, as far as possible, unbiased. Their task will be to gather evidence and sift fact. No one has the right to expect more.

If smoking is an offending agent in causing lung cancer, the American smoking public is entitled to know. If smoking is accorded a clean bill of health that also should be publicized to put an end to the controversy.

BULLETIN  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
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### Air Pollution and Health

An investigation which promises to provide an unbiased report on the effect of smoking, automobile fumes and other air pollutants on health, is to be made during the next year by 12 scientists to be named by the United States Public Health Service.

This inquiry, unlike others which have implicated tobacco smoke as a cause of lung cancer, will be official and has in addition the backing of several medical groups, the tobacco industry and several other federal agencies. Scientists who have already expressed opinions on the possible relationship between smoking and health will not be chosen.

The nature and magnitude of the hazards will first be explored and this phase is expected to take six months or more. The second task will be to make recommendations to reduce the dangers.

Ever since a rise has been noted in the incidence of respiratory diseases, and particularly lung cancer, violent controversy has raged over the effects of various pollution factors, notably tobacco and automobile fumes. Progress in cutting down the latter has been marked, as a report on success of their elimination in diesel buses in Philadelphia shows. Partisanship has been noted in some of the inquiries, and the determination of the Public Health Service to make an official investigation should dispel many doubts, and replace some of the heat with light.

By many, and particularly by smokers, the inquiry will be followed with an acutely personal interest that such investigations ordinarily lack.

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